

A blue-tinted photograph of two young girls sitting on the floor, looking at a tablet together. They appear to be in a classroom or library setting. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Let's Go Learn

Supporting Project-Based Learning & Integrated Thematic Units

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Introduction

Good ideas stand the test of time; such is the case with curricular approaches such as Project-Based Learning (PBL) and Integrated Thematic Units (ITU).

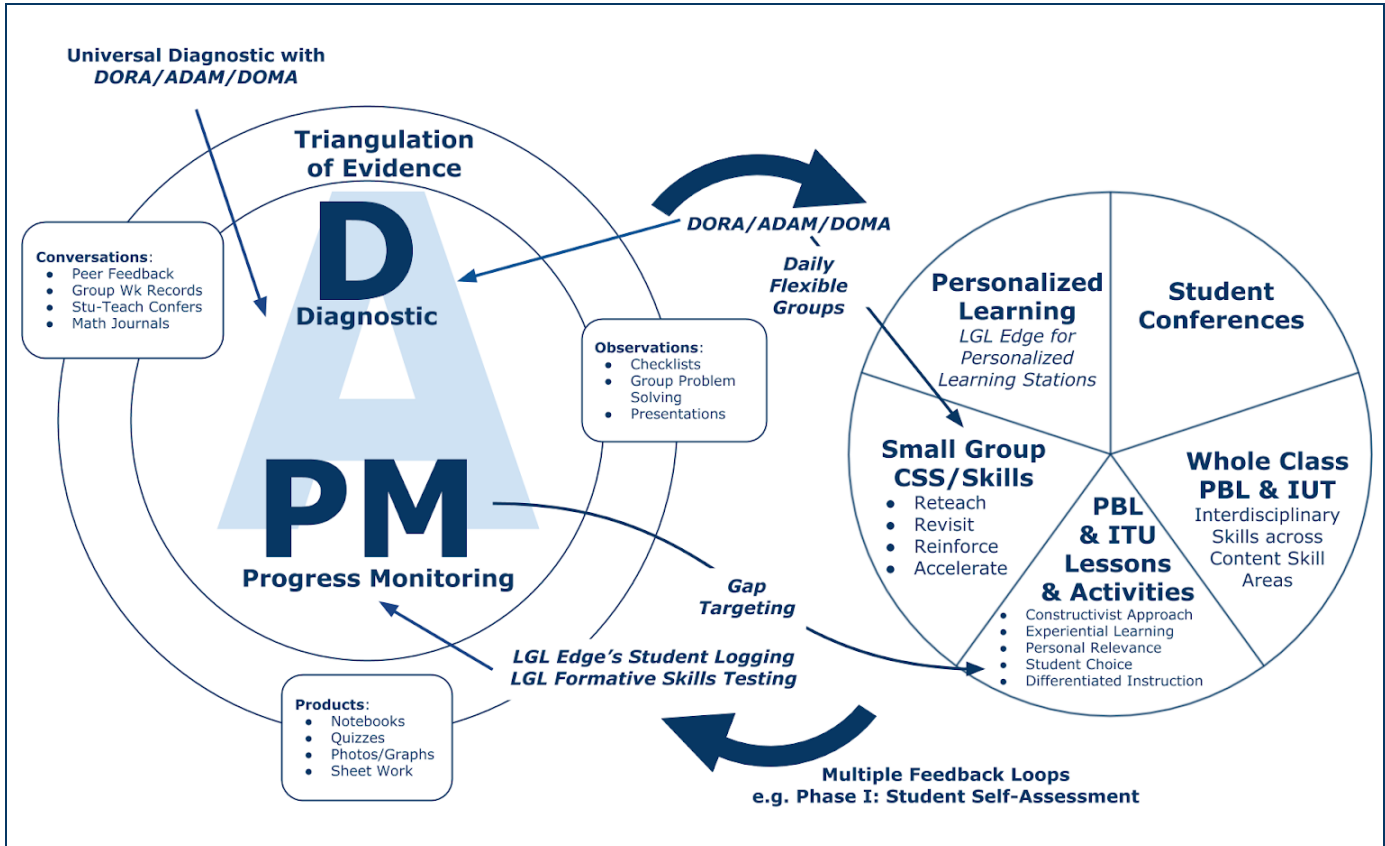
These approaches are built upon four central principles:

- 1.** Curriculum should be purposeful and meaningful – that is, real. When our objects of study are relevant and connected to our daily lives, both motivation and learning increase.
- 2.** Curriculum should engage all learning modalities. Montessori knew that there are many ways to learn and our senses are key to this endeavor.
- 3.** Curriculum should reach across content areas. We separate out the “content areas” as a way to simplify the complexity in the world, but in the end, we have to put them all together to solve problems.
- 4.** Curriculum should require students to take agency in their own learning. Kids develop into independent learners when we give them opportunities to be independent learners!

While these are powerful ideas, the devil is in the details. To implement a successful PBL program or an ITU requires a great deal of planning, preparation, and support.

Tutor Doctor Lakeway has partnered with Let’s Go Learn’s products and services can help directly in this process.

The A & I Cycle in a PBL/ITU-Based Program



Developing a PBL or ITU requires teachers to be knowledgeable of the existing abilities of their students. Teachers must be sensitive to the task demands of the activities they employ. For example, if you assign a reading or text, what Lexile (or another readability measure) should you choose?

Even after you choose, can you identify students who won't be able to read the text?

How will students who can't handle that text get access to its contents?

The same principle holds true for PBL or ITUs that employ math, mathematic reasoning, or content knowledge. In other words, it's very important to know as much about our students as possible when designing and implementing curriculum.

LGL Assessments Support PBL & ITUs

While many reading experts won't admit it, the truth is that reading is not a content area. Here's how you know: when you read, you read about something – that's content. (Duh!)

Reading is a set of process skills that support content learning. This is a critical distinction for LGL. Our assessment tools are designed to provide teachers with insight into students' knowledge of the process skills that form the foundation for reading and math.

As mentioned above, programs such as PBL and ITUs require teachers to make assumptions about students' ability levels in reading and math.

Let's Go Learn's tools help to take the guesswork out of such planning. LGL's diagnostic tools provide a set of individualized and group-based reports broken out by sub-test and skill level.

These fine-grained standards-based reports allow classroom teachers the ability to:

1. Share individual-level data with students and parents while conferencing,
2. Create small instructional groups based on common needs,
3. Identify students for intervention, and
4. Track student progress across time when used as a repeated measure.

LGL Instruction Supports PBL & ITUs

On the day-to-day level, the success of programs such as PBL and ITU rests with teachers' ability to support the development of the process skills (such as those identified in DORA & ADAM) necessary for learning content material. It's easy to identify the cool content; it's a bit harder to identify and address the process skills involved. The challenge in a second-grade classroom with PBL or ITU is to find a way to teach kids about long vowels while at the same time teaching them the content. The same challenge exists at all grade levels and across all content areas.

Tutor Doctor Lakeway uses LGL's data-driven personalized learning tools to assist teachers as they systematically address students' skill development in reading and math. *TutorDoctorLakeways STAAR ELA* and *STARR Math Edge courses* are directly linked to the diagnostic assessments. Once students complete the assessments, the program creates a personalized learning trajectory for each student. The exact nature of the activities and the order in which they are introduced is based on the level of student achievement shown in the assessments – not on grade level or other criteria. When students are re-assessed, the new data is used to track their growth and to set a new trajectory.

Conclusion

Tutor Doctor Lakeway uses LGL & personalized learning provide teachers a variety of options for utilizing the program. Teachers have reported using *LGL Edge* individually, in groups or centers, and in whole groups in a computer lab. Teachers have also reported that having these personalized tools available on laptops, iPads, and other devices makes for easy access to the program at school and at home. Further, teachers report that they can easily monitor student engagement with the program (via time) and level of performance (via the % correct). Having this data helps them support students' independent learning while at the same time targeting foundational skill development.

